

Love You by EvieSmallwood

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: F/M, M/M, Soulmate AU, ot3: monster hunters

Language: English

Characters: Jonathan Byers, Nancy Wheeler, Steve Harrington

Relationships: Jonathan Byers/Steve Harrington/Nancy Wheeler

Status: Completed

Published: 2018-01-04

Updated: 2018-01-04

Packaged: 2022-04-03 15:14:12

Rating: Teen And Up Audiences

Warnings: No Archive Warnings Apply

Chapters: 1

Words: 1,679

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

In the storybooks, it said that the moment you met your soulmate, the world would light up with colour; love at first sight—fate, destiny. Other books said the reaction was gradual, caused by uncertainty or fear. Sometimes the psychosis (Nancy had to look that word up and still wasn't sure what it meant) blocked or dimmed the body's natural reaction.

That was far from the case here, not that any of them would figure that out for a while.

Love You

Nancy Wheeler had grown up grey. Her whole family had, she supposed, but it had always been her life's goal to see the world as it really was first.

She remembered, solidly, wandering around the park at six years old, imagining what green was like. She remembered lying on her back and watching the clouds drift by, wishing she knew what blue was like. She had an idea. She thought it would be bright and patient. She thought that blue might be her favourite almost-colour.

When she asked her mother what the world looked like, with those different hues and shades, her mom stared back blankly.

“Nancy,” she’d said, lips tugging upward into a swift (albeit false) smile. She’d rounded the counter, brushing flour off her hands. “You don’t need to worry about all of that right now, okay?”

“Why can’t you just tell me?” Nancy’d stared up at her, brow knit with confusion. What was wrong with asking?

“I don’t... I don’t want to get your hopes up. Not everyone...” Karen pursed her lips. “Not everyone gets to know what the world really looks like, Nancy.”

“You mean I might not ever know?!” Nancy jerked herself out of her mother’s grasp, fear practically strangling her. And then, even at six, she realised. And even at six she wasn’t stupid enough to say it. “Mom...”

“Don’t worry about it, baby,” Karen smiled again, and this time there was a desperate sort of comfort behind it. “Just learn to love what you have, okay?”

Nancy nodded. “Okay, mommy,” she said. *I’m sorry I’ll know before you ever will.*

On the first day of kindergarten, she bumped into a boy.

He was scruffy-looking, and small. Everything about him made her sorry—from the worn look of his clothes, to the purple-greenish bruise on his wrist.

She found herself fixed on it, eyes wide. It was so... pretty. Later, she would compare it to a galaxy.

He stared right back, eyes fixed on her own, equally as startled. "Sorry," he said, ducking past her. She watched him go, dizzy.

In the storybooks, it said that the moment you met your soulmate, the world would light up with colour; love at first sight—fate, destiny. Other books said the reaction was gradual, caused by uncertainty or fear. Sometimes the psychosis (Nancy had to look that word up and still wasn't sure what it meant) blocked or dimmed the body's natural reaction.

That was far from the case here, not that any of them would figure that out for a while.

She walked to class with her head down, gaze locked onto her Mary Janes, and was startled to see little purple hearts on her socks. She stopped in her tracks and looked around. Most of the other kids were already in line to enter the classroom.

She knelt down and brushed the fabric gently, just to be sure. Not grey, not black. Purple. It had to be purple, because bruises were purple and these hearts were the exact same shade as that mark on the boy's arm.

"Alright, kids, who's ready for their first day?"

Nancy's head snapped up. She ran to the end of the line, pigtails bouncing, heart racing.

Jonathan Byers wasn't in her kindergarten class; he'd been placed in the second one, with about ten other kids. They were what the first graders called "leftovers".

Apparently, Nancy's group was "fresh meat".

Most of the bullies avoided her, though. Nancy had decided within five minutes that she didn't like anyone in her class. They were all loud and noisy and gross.

She sat alone at recess, watching the kids play, and spotted him.

He was alone, too. Sitting by a big oak tree with a book in his lap—only he wasn't reading it, because two stocky boys were standing over him, calling him names.

Nancy stood a little shakily, fists balled. Her mom had told her that no one deserved to be picked on, and to stand up to people who were mean—to her or anyone else. And so, face hot, she marched over to them.

“Leave him alone!”

The boys turned. They were laughing, and as soon as they saw her, their laughter turned into sheer joy. “Is this your *girlfriend*, Byers?!”

Nancy grit her teeth. She wasn't anyone's anything, and she knew that even then. Although, in the long run, that would be one of the least worst insults anyone ever threw at either of them.

“Stop it, Mason,” said the boy. “Just... go find someone your own size to pick on.”

Mason and his friend giggled. “Oooo, I'm shaking!”

“You should be,” Nancy snapped, not quite knowing where the anger had come from. “Get lost.”

Maybe it was something in her eyes, or the shock of being stood up to by a girl, but they did go. Shaking their heads and rolling their eyes, sure, but at least leaving them alone.

Nancy turned to the boy. He looked embarrassed. “I didn't need your help,” he said.

“Yeah you did,” she retorted, confused. “Those guys are jerks, anyway.”

"Yeah," he nodded. She could tell he was blushing from the darker grey on his cheeks. "Thanks, I guess."

"I'm Nancy," Nancy said.

"Jonathan," said Jonathan. And that was that.

Days became weeks, weeks became months, and months became years—but each appearance by Jonathan Byers seemed to give her a new colour; light green, a pale yellow, and a dark red. Blood red.

After a while, she realised new colours were only accompanied by new wounds, and she realised that she would have gladly never seen any new colour if it meant he would never be hurt again.

They drifted apart, not that they were ever particularly close anyway. Their brothers were, and that meant Nancy saw Jonathan more often than she would have cared for. When he was around, waiting on her doorstep or awkwardly standing in the kitchen while her mother gushed over how well-behaved Will was, she didn't look at him. She didn't want to see his hurt.

After a while he stopped looking, too. After a while it didn't matter anymore, because Lonnie was gone, and with him went the bruises and split lips and cuts.

In the middle of their Freshman year, Steve Harrington moved to Hawkins.

He was rich, commented her father, the night before Steve's supposed first day at Hawkins High. They were sitting around the dinner table, all of them subdued.

"What does that matter?" Nancy glanced up from her steak. The blood seeping out of it made her sick. She never ate steak.

Her father fixed her with a stare that was as hard as it was indifferent. Ted Wheeler had accepted long ago that nothing he did now would change the future, and he lived by that acceptance.

"You wouldn't understand," Ted decided, and Nancy felt heat rise to

her face.

“Why not?”

“It’s not your concern,” Ted went back to his food, and Nancy didn’t waste any more time waiting for a real answer.

Mike caught her eye. He rolled his. She rolled hers back. They finished their meal in almost silence, silverware clinking and Holly cooing lightly. Nancy abandoned her plate halfway through and went upstairs. She fell asleep to a world of greys and bruises.

The next day, she doesn’t meet Steve Harrington. She hears about him, and walks in on two girls gossiping about how cute he is in the girl’s bathroom.

No, she doesn’t meet Steve Harrington that day, or the day after; he’s not in any of her honours classes, and he doesn’t seem to show up at lunch.

But she sees him in gym that third day, by which time she’d almost become convinced that he was a myth, and it takes her less than a second to know in her stomach; if Jonathan provides her with the essential yet valuable dulls of the world, Steve Harrington will make everything sharper.

She knows that, because the second she lays eyes on him, colour bleeds into the world.

It’s not everywhere. There are plenty of muted and greys all around, but she catches dull coppers in his brown hair, and his shorts, which are blue, are plenty obvious.

His eye catches hers, and she sees them slowly widen. Her’s don’t, and she isn’t sure why.

And that’s how that goes.

The weeks slowly passed, but those weeks were essential. Within them, her classes passed in a blur, and the sky turned blue.

And after that, everything went to shit.

“Jonathan? It's me man! I-It's Steve!”

Nancy felt her heart stop. Her grip tightened on the gun. “Can you let me in?! I just wanna talk!”

Nancy glanced at Jon before jerking the door open. Steve stood in front of her, the bruises on his face perfectly clear. “Nancy? What—?”

Everything after that to her was a blur. She remembered telling him to leave, and him stepping inside, and the rest was history.

It was history, and maybe if the world believed in the monsters they'd seen, it would have gone down in history books.

Steve stepped into the Byers practically destroyed home, and all at once Nancy Wheeler's world was changed. She saw, first, how the colour melted into Steve's shirt, and then Jonathan's pale hand gripping it. Then the lights above them flashed in a thousand colours, bright and clear and almost deafening.

Nancy stared at them, slack jawed, breath caught in her throat. It was coming, yes, but they were here.

Their eyes met, hers and Jon's, and she felt six years old again. “Jon...”

“What the hell...?”

Her head whipped around and she faced Steve. “It's coming,” she said aloud. “You should go.”

“No! Hell no! I'm not leaving my—” the words died in his throat as something clicked loudly behind her. Nancy closed her eyes, colour still blazing behind her lids, and then rounded on the monster.

Everything changed with colour, and though she wasn't the first Wheeler to see it fully, she absolutely wouldn't be the last.

Author's Note:

Thank you for reading! This was originally posted on tumblr for the Writer's Guild Soulmate AU Day :)